

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 25 AND 26, 2002

Under the provisions of G.L. Ch. 30A and pursuant to the authority found in G.L. Ch. 130 ss. 17A, 80, 100A, and 104, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) have scheduled hearings on the following proposals. Contact the Division of Marine Fisheries for draft regulations and further details.

1) Three proposals pertaining to summer flounder (322 CMR 6.22):

- (a) DMF proposal to amend recreational fishing restrictions by eliminating the closed season that currently extends from Jan. 1 – May 24 and Sept. 6 – Dec. 31;
- (b) Public petition to open the directed commercial fishery during summer/fall on June 1; and
- (c) Public petition to alter the summer flounder commercial no-fishing days during the summer/fall season from Friday-Saturday to Saturday-Sunday.

2) DMF proposals to amend scup summer/fall commercial trip limits and seasons (322 6.28):

- (a) For trawlers fishing during the squid season, trip limit would increase from 100 to 300 lbs.;
- (b) For the weir fishery, the overall set-aside of the state's summer/fall quota would increase from 75,000 to 100,000 lbs.
- (c) For the summer-time directed fishery, the opening would occur on July 1 instead of July 17 and the daily possession limit would be increased from 200 to 250 lbs.

3) DMF proposal to amend scup recreational regulations (322 CMR 8.06):

The daily possession limits for recreational anglers aboard for-hire vessels would be amended by adopting a 100-fish limit for the entire recreational season (January 1 - October 6). (Current regulations allow 100 fish per angler during May and June and 50 during July through October.) Limits for shore anglers and those on private vessels would remain unchanged: 50 fish per angler with a maximum of 100 fish per vessel regardless of the number of anglers aboard.

4) DMF proposals to amend black sea bass commercial regulations [322 CMR 6.28(3)] to comply with Addendum VI of the federal Black Sea Bass Plan:

- a) The following trip limits are proposed per quarter with corresponding adjustments when 60% of the quarterly quota is projected to be taken:
 - For Quarter II (April through June) a daily possession limit of 1500 pounds/day that will be adjusted to 150 pounds/day for all gears or 1,000 pounds/week for the directed sea bass pot fishery.
 - For Quarter III (July through September) would start with a possession limit of 500 pounds/day and adjust to 100 pounds/day for all gears or 700 pounds/week for the directed sea bass pot fishery.
 - For Quarter IV (October through December) will start with a possession limit of 750 pounds/day and adjust to 100 pounds/day for all gears or 700 pounds/week for the directed sea bass pot fishery.
- b) Fish pot vent size is proposed to increase to 1 3/8 by 5 3/4 inches or a circular vent of 2 3/8 inches in diameter; or a square vent with sides of 2 inches inside measure.

5) DMF proposals to amend commercial lobster regulations (322 CMR 6.00) to comply with Amendment 3 of the Lobster Management Plan

a) Area-specific minimum size changes and vent size increases.

- For Lobster Conservation Management Area 2, Area 3, and Outer Cape the minimum size would be increased by 1/16" to 3 5/16" effective July 1, 2002.
- Additional increases of 1/32" would occur on July 1, 2003 and July 1, 2004.
- Lobster vent size would also be increased effective January 1, 2003 to 2" x 5 3/4" for rectangular vents or 2 1/2" for circular vents.

- DMF seeks comments on whether to extend the proposed minimum size increases and vent size increase to Area 1 thereby making them state-wide regulations.

b) Area-specific effort reduction

- For the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management Area, an effort reduction program to reduce traps by 25% is proposed that limits eligibility to fish traps in OCCLMA based on fishing history. Fishermen who do not satisfy the eligibility criteria would be ineligible to fish in this area beginning in 2002.
- Future trap allocations per fishermen will be calculated on a per license basis based on fishing history in 2000, and reductions in overall traps allocated in the OCCLMA would occur whenever traps are transferred between fishermen in this area through a mandatory 10% attrition rate of transferred traps.
- A trap haul-out period is proposed during January 1 through March 31 of each year to assist in the enforcement of the trap cap, and no lobster traps would be allowed in the waters of the OCCLMA during this time period.
- DMF seeks comments on whether to enact similar effort control programs for other Lobster Conservation Areas.

c) Enhanced v-notching and protection of v-notched female lobsters in Area 1

- For Area 1, lobstermen would be required to carve a "V-shaped Notch" into the flipper to the right of the center flipper on all egg-bearing female lobsters encountered during fishing operations. For purposes of enforcement in Area 1, the definition of a "V-shaped notch" would also be more conservative than the existing definition and shall mean a "V-shaped notch" of any size regardless of the depth of the cut or the presence of setal hairs.
- DMF also seeks comments on whether to adopt the above definition or maintain the existing definition on a statewide basis for all Lobster Conservation Management Areas.

TWO HEARINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED:

Monday, March 25, 2002 (7-10 p.m.) at the Forestdale School and

Tuesday, March 26, 2002 (7-9 p.m.) at the Gloucester Public Library.

Written comments (by mail or fax) will be accepted until 5 P.M. on Friday, March 29, 2002.